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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 02/27/06

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Poll: 58% see no need for Maehara to resign; DPJ substantially down in public support

Kyodo News conducted a telephone-based spot nationwide public opinion survey on Feb. 25-26 over an opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) lawmaker's parliamentary pursuit of Livedoor's alleged emailed order to send money to an LDP executive's son. In the survey, respondents were asked if they thought DPJ President Seiji Maehara should resign as party president. In response to this question, 27.6% answered "yes", with 58.7% saying "no" though he is responsible, and 7.8% saying he is not responsible.

Public support for the DPJ was 11.3%, showing a substantial drop of 5.7 percentage points from the last telephone-based poll in January. The figure is the lowest ever since the merger of the DPJ and the Liberal Party in October 2003, and it shows the public's wavering trust in the DPJ.

In the survey, respondents were also asked if they thought Toshiyasu Nagata, a House of Representatives member who took up the email issue in the Diet, should resign his Diet seat. In response to this question, "yes" accounted for 37.6% with "no" at

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22.9 % . However, 37.9% answered they "can't say which." Nagata's future course seems to be up to how the DPJ handles the email issue.

The approval rating for the Koizumi cabinet was 51.8%, down 1.1 points from the last survey. The disapproval rating was 37.2%, up 2.9 points. In the breakdown of reasons for supporting the Koizumi cabinet, 38.2% picked "there's no other appropriate person," up 8.0 points from the last survey. However, there was a decrease in the proportion of positive reasons, such as "because something can be expected of its administrative reform." In particular, the proportion of those picking "because something can be expected of its foreign policies" dropped to 0.3%.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted over a period of two days, Feb. 25-26, on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. The computer-aided RDD methodology, which makes and puts out telephone numbers at random for polling, can survey those who do not have their telephone numbers listed in telephone directories. Among those randomly generated telephone numbers, those actually for household use with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,488. Answers were obtained from 1,027 persons.

4) Lawmaker Nagata to apologize in day or two for e-mail fuss; Minshuto to decide on position before end of the week

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
February 27, 2006

The largest opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) decided yesterday to have its House of Representative member Hisayasu Nagata make an apology at a press conference in a day or two for having alleged without conclusive proof in the Diet (that former Livedoor Co. President Takafumi Horie had sent his staff an email ordering a transfer of 30 million yen to Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe's son). Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshihiko Noda will accompany Noda at the press conference. Minshuto intends to put an end to the e-mail issue without the resignation of Nagata.

The LDP will consider whether to submit to the Diet a motion to punish Nagata after watching the press conference.

The main opposition party intends to hold a press conference to announce the results of its investigation into the credibility of the e-mail before the end of this week when the fiscal 2006 budget is scheduled to clear the Lower House.

The party has found through its investigation that the sender and recipient of the e-mail were both the same person who provided the e-mail to Nagata. A party member familiar with the issue explained that the source might have forwarded the e-mail obtained from someone else to his own e-mail address and printed

it, and therefore, it cannot be proved that the e-mail is fake. However, it is a fact that Nagata did not make his allegation with a true and correct copy.

Hatoyama told reporters yesterday, "(Nagata) should apologize on his own to the public in a day or two."

Appearing on an NHK talk show program yesterday, Maehara stated: "We have not arrived at a conclusion that the e-mail is 100%

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credible. I sincerely apologize for lawmaker Nagata having posed questions based on such information." Hatoyama also said on a Fuji TV program, "(The party leadership) needs to apologize before finding the result of the investigation." Asked about how the party leaders should take responsibility, Hatoyama responded, "Now is not time to arrive at a conclusion. We will reveal the results of our investigation into the matter and make a decision after seeing public opinion."

LDP Acting Secretary General Ichiro Aisawa stated on a TV Asahi program yesterday: "We will decide" on whether to submit a motion to punish Nagata "after seeing (his press conference). If he decides to give up on his Diet seat, that would be one option to take political responsibility."

5) Gaps in views of Minshuto executives on Diet uproar caused by "e-mail" issue

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
February 27, 2006

The main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) executive has gone along with a plan to have its House of Representative member Hisayasu Nagata, who is at the center of the e-mail scandal, remain in his Diet post, by letting him make an official apology today. However, it is obvious that there still remain gaps in views of the executive members on adverse effects on Diet debate caused by Nagata's questions, as well as his lack of efforts to check the credibility of the e-mail. Depending on trends in public opinion, Minshuto may continue to waver internally regarding Nagata's future course of action and the accountability of the party leadership.

Appearing on a Fuji TV program yesterday, Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama stated, "I apologize for causing confusion in the Diet session, which has to conduct deliberations on the FY 2006 budget." President Seiji Maehara, however, clearly stated on a TV Asahi program yesterday: "We have been severely pursuing a set of four issues, including the earthquake-proof data falsification scam. I don't think the Diet is in a state of confusion."

Regarding the criticism of Minshuto for failing to confirm the credibility of the e-mail, Hatoyama implicitly criticized Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshihiko Noda, with commenting,

"It is probably the problem of lack of my political presence that I was not well informed of (the e-mail issue) in advance. It is true that we lacked a crisis management awareness. I'm not happy with such criticism."

6) Sender and recipient of e-mail in question both found to be freelance reporter, Minshuto determines

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top Play) (Full)
February 27, 2006

In the e-mail fiasco involving former Livedoor President Takafumi Horie and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe's son, the sender and recipient of the e-mail in question had been unknown because those portions had been blacked out. But it was unveiled yesterday through investigations by the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) that both the sender and

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recipient are the same person and not Horie. According to several party members, the person who introduced the e-mail to House of Representatives member Hisayasu Nagata, a Minshuto member, is a freelance reporter.

A Minshuto member, though, said: "The allegation cannot be completely denied," keeping in mind the possibility that the contents of the e-mail were altered. The opposition party has continued fact-finding inquiries from persons concerned and intends to announce the results of the investigation by the end of this week if things go smoothly.

In an effort to look into the e-mail's authenticity, the party investigation team poured its energy into finding out the sender and the recipient of the e-mail, portions which reportedly had already been blacked out when Nagata obtained it. As a result, the party found the e-mail address of the freelance reporter printed on the mail, according to informed sources. It is believed that the reporter sent it to his own mail address for some reason.

Minshuto has confirmed, though, that the mail is highly likely to have actually been sent out at 3:21 p.m. on Aug. 26 of last year, as it says on the e-mail's time-stamp. Given this, a party member commented: "Little attention had been paid to relations between Livedoor funds and political circles as of last August, so the possibility cannot be completely ruled out that the controversial e-mail had been created based on some information on an e-mail actually sent out by Livedoor."

In this connection, Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshihiko Noda stated on a TV program yesterday:

"It is difficult to prove the authenticity of the e-mail at present, but I do not support the allegation that it was fabricated. Even if some parts of the e-mail were altered, there are some that seem credible in content."

7) Marine chart software for all vessels found to have been leaked along with leakage of MSDF's information; Fear of strategic accuracy being known to other countries

MAINICHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
February 26, 2006

It was learned yesterday that marine chart software, developed independently for antisubmarine patrolling in Japanese waters, had been leaked out along with the data recently leaked out from the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF). The software can show a color image of seafloor topography of a specified sea area in three dimensions, which makes it easy to work out a strategy. According to an MSDF official concerned, the software was developed as the basic software used for all vessels, submarines and patrol aircraft, and is still in use. Given the fear of strategic accuracy being known to other countries through the leaked software, Japan will be forced to change its national defense plan.

This marine chart software was developed by an engineering official at the MSDF's Operation and Development Unit (currently Vessel Development Unit) around 2000. The purpose was to make it easier to work out a strategy by using a highly detailed image of

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seafloor topography in three dimensions. The software was upgraded 16 times until September 2002.

According to the manual and other files that come with the software, when an area is specified on the computer screen, a bird's eye-view of seabed topography is shown along with geographic latitude and longitude, as well as depth, and a cross-section image also can be shown. When an island shown on the chart is clicked, data relating to the island, such as its name, circumference, and area, are shown. The software has a number of functions, such as calculating a specified ground area and show

sun-rising time and sun-setting time, the direction and altitude of the sun quickly.

8) US bases in Okinawa: Japan, US in US military realignment talks agree on joint use of Kadena base and Camp Hansen

Mainichi (Page 1) (Excerpts)
February 26, 2006

By Masaki Miyashita

In the ongoing talks on the realignment of US forces in Japan, the Japanese and US governments have agreed on plans for joint use of the US Kadena Air Base and the US Marine Corps' Camp Hansen between the US forces and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), the Mainichi Shimbun learned yesterday. This is the first agreement in accordance with the interim report on the realignment of US bases in Okinawa, released last October. The joint-use plans will be incorporated in the final report to come out at the end of March. But local objections to the plans are likely to intensify because strengthening of military links comes first before anything else amid slow progress in talks on burden reduction, such as noise reduction at the Kadena base and a cut in US Marines in Okinawa.

According to the agreement, the US Air Force and the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) will conduct joint drills - aerial combat, search and rescue, and transportation - by using F15-fighters with the Kadena base as the center of the drills. In Camp Hansen, the Marine Corps and the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) will conduct combat and live-fire training. The objective is to reinforce joint operational capabilities, assuming an emergency in Japan and a response to a large-scale terrorist attack. Both bases are the facilities for the US forces' exclusive use, so there is the need to follow the procedures for joint use in accordance with the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement.

9) Land, Infrastructure and Transport Ministry's simulation: 470 commercial flights being forced to make detours or steep turns daily to avoid Yokota RAPCON zone; Number of flights expected to increase to 650 in 2006

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
Evening, February 25, 2006

About 470 fights taking off from and landing at Haneda and Narita Air Ports are being forced daily to make detours, steep climbing turns, or other measures due to the rights to air traffic control owned by Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, known as Yokota radar approach control (Yokota RAPCON), according to the Land, Infrastructure and Transport Ministry's first ever simulation. With Haneda and

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other airports scheduled to accommodate more flights in 2009, Yokota RAPCON is expected to affect an estimate 650 flights that year. The simulation underpinned the theory that a partial return of the southern part of Yokota RAPCON will lead to shorter flight time and less fuel.

The airports' operational hours show that at present a plane has to make a detour around Yokota RAPCON every two minutes, but the frequency is expected to increase to every 90 seconds in 2009 and beyond. Experts have repeatedly pointed out that Yokota RAPCON has been restricting flight routes in Japan and its proximity, causing near misses. The Japanese and the US government have been conducting talks for a return of the airspace to Japan. The ministry's simulation has nothing to do with the bilateral talks, according to a ministry source.

According to the simulation, at present about 190 flights from Haneda to northern Kyushu, such as Fukuoka, and Chugoku and Shikoku are forced to climb steeply over Tokyo Bay in order to rise over Yokota RAPCON. Without Yokota RAPCON, flight time can be shortened by three minutes. Conversely, 240 flights from such destinations to Haneda are forced to spend nine extra minutes to go around the southern edge of Yokota RAPCON. In addition, some

40 flights from Narita to such destinations as South Korea's Seoul and China's Beijing need to spend seven extra minutes to fly over the Boso area.

Haneda Airport is scheduled to open its fourth runway in 2009 and Narita Airport is expected to expand its second runway to 2,500 meters to increase their capability to handle takeoffs and landings to 1.4 and 1.1 times, respectively. This also means that Yokota RAPCON will affect a total of 646 flights: 266 from Haneda, 336 to Haneda, and 44 to Narita.

10) US vows to cut 8,000 Marines in Okinawa

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
February 27, 2006

The United States has told Japan that it would be possible to reduce up to about 8,000 US Marines in Okinawa as a step for the planned realignment of US forces in Japan to alleviate the island prefecture's base-hosting burden, sources revealed yesterday. Meanwhile, the Japanese and US governments have already released an interim report incorporating a bilateral agreement to reduce about 7,000 Okinawa-based Marines. The two governments, slated to come up with a final report in late March, would like to work out details about their respective shares of the cost of Marine relocation to Guam. The US government wants this to be settled along with Futenma airfield's relocation. However, the government is facing difficulties in its coordination with base-hosting local communities.

The US government has offered to reduce Okinawa-based Marines, including those assigned to the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force's headquarters at Camp Courtney, a US military base located in the city of Uruma, and the greater part of them will be moved to Guam. The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit-currently based at Camp Hansen in the town of Kin and other municipalities-and most other combat troops are expected to remain deployed in Okinawa.

In realignment talks, the Japanese government asked the US

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government to show grounds for the US government's estimated costs for Marine relocation to Guam. The US government, in its calculation of troop cuts, deemed it possible to carry out a reduction of up to 8,000 troops from the current deployment of about 15,000 Marines in Okinawa. Their family dependents are expected to total about 10,000.

Japan and the United States are to share costs for relocation to Guam. However, the Japanese government has asked the US government to show detailed grounds for the US government's estimate amounting to approximately 8 billion dollars. In addition, the two governments have yet to finalize their respective shares in the costs.

Furthermore, the US government's position is that it would be difficult to move the Okinawa-based Marines if Futenma airfield cannot be relocated from the city of Ginowan to Cape Henoko in the city of Nago. The US government has been insisting on settling Marine relocation to Guam and Futenma relocation to Henoko as a "package" to maintain deterrence.

Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro, however, has been calling for the Japanese government to modify the Cape Henoko plan. Prime Minister Koizumi has rejected the call. There has been no progress in coordination between the government and local authorities.

11) Final Japan-US coordination on USFJ realignment will add another 1,000 US Marines to tally to make reduction of Marines on Okinawa total 8,000; Three facilities also to be fully returned

YOMIURI (Top play) (Excerpt)
February 26, 2006

It was learned on Feb. 25 that the US government has informed the

Japanese government that in connection with the reduction of US Marines stationed on Okinawa -- a showcase feature of the realignment of US forces in Japan -- it is thinking of adding another 1,000 more than originally planned, as a result of close examination of troop relocation possibilities, to bring the total number to 8,000 troops. In addition, the Japanese and US governments are now in the final process of coordinating the inclusion in the final report on USFJ realignment the consolidation and realignment of four facilities in south and central Okinawa that were not set by the interim report last October. Three of the four facilities that will be included in the final report in March will be fully returned: Naha Military Port in Naha City, Makiminato Service Area in Urasoe, and Camp Kuwae in Chitancho. The fourth facility, Camp Zukeran in Ginowan will be partially returned.

12) US sounds out Japan on GSDF deployment to Basra

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
February 27, 2006

Washington, Kyodo

The US government has recently sounded out the Japanese government on sending Ground Self-Defense Force officers to the southern Iraqi city of Basra to have them participate in a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) for the purpose of helping

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Iraq improve its security and administrative capabilities, sources said yesterday. In addition, the US government has also asked Japan to expand the scope of Air Self-Defense Force activities using C-130 transport planes to two localities, including Baghdad, sources close to Japan-US relations revealed.

The US government, which wants to have Iraq establish its legitimate government at an early date, has repeatedly urged Japan to participate in the PRT, with an eye on Japan's planned withdrawal of GSDF troops in late May. However, this is the first time that the US government has called for Japan's engagement with specific place names.

The Japanese government remains cautious about participating in the PRT for fear of casualties among GSDF personnel. However, some Japanese government officials take it as "a de facto request to dispatch GSDF troops to Basra," and the Japanese government is continuing internal consultations. The government will likely be pressed to come up with an extremely difficult decision along with that on the expansion of airlift missions.

13) US, Britain, Australia concurs with Japan's plan to withdraw GSDF from Samawah during end of March to May

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpt)
Evening, February 25, 2006

In a meeting on Feb. 24 (local time) of working-level foreign and security affairs officials at the British Defense Ministry in London, the Japanese government has briefed and received the concurrence of the US, British, and Australian governments on a plan to start withdrawal of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops carrying out humanitarian assistance activities in Samawah in southern Iraq in late March, and complete the pull out by mid-May. There is a possibility of the start of the withdrawal being delayed due to the changes in the public security situation at the local site, so Prime Minister Koizumi is thinking of making the final determination on the timing, looking at the moves of the other countries' troops and the political process in Iraq.

14) Iranian foreign minister to arrive in Japan today; Prime Minister, Foreign Minister to call for giving up on nuclear ambitions

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
February 27, 2006

Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki will arrive in Japan today. He will meet Foreign Minister Taro Aso the same day and pay courtesy call on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi tomorrow. Should the United Nations Security Council adopt a resolution calling for economic sanctions against Iran for its resumption of nuclear research activities, including uranium enrichment, Japan's oil policy will be enormously affected. Japan imports 15% of its petroleum from Iran and is pushing ahead with a project to independently exploit a large-scale oil field in that nation. Keeping this in mind, Japan intends to convey to Mottaki the international community's strong reaction to his country's moves, urging Iran to give up on its nuclear ambitions.

Iran is the third largest oil supplier to Japan, following Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. The nation houses the Azadegan

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oil field in its southwest part, in which Japanese companies have engaged in developing oil. The two countries have established friendly ties, and Japan has taken a different stance toward the nation from that of the US, which deems the nation as part of the "axis of evil."

In a press briefing held prior to a meeting with Mottaki, Aso said: "I will say what the other side doesn't want to hear," indicating that he would try to persuade Iran to give up its nuclear research activities.

The Japanese side is ready to seek a peaceful solution by taking such an approach as praising the proposed plan for Iran to carry out the uranium enrichment process in Russia as "constructive," as Aso has noted.

Iran has asserted: "Peaceful use (of nuclear weapons) has been allowed for Japan, a member nation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), like Iran." Keeping this in mind, the Japanese government will explain that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recognized as a result of nearly 30 years of surveillance that "there are no doubts about Japan converting nuclear material for military use." Based on this, Japan will urge Iran to cooperate with IAEA inspections.

15) Yuji Miyamoto named next ambassador to China

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
February 25, 2006

Yuji Miyamoto, ambassador in charge of Okinawa affairs, a member of the so-called "China School," a group of specialists in the Chinese in the Foreign Ministry, was appointed yesterday to serve as next ambassador to China. The ministry initially intended to pick Yutaka Iimura, incumbent ambassador to Indonesia, a non-China School member, to the post, but it later made an unusual step to back off from its plan, having met a negative response from the Prime Minister's Official residence. A high ministry official commented on Miyamoto's appointment: "He is not a person to try to gain China's favor even though he belongs to the China School. He has his own opinions."

16) ITER: Japan to place 20% or 11 billion yen worthy of orders with South Korea from its budget framework; Acknowledgement of support for Japan's bid to host project

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
February 27, 2006

In the construction of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), the government has decided to allocate approximately 11 billion yen for projects or about 20% of Japan's budget to South Korea. In the original plan, the government intended to place orders for such with Japanese companies. Japan has obtained preferential treatments, including an expanded procurement framework in return for giving in to the EU on the construction site for facilities for the ITER. South Korea had been resentful of Japan alone being preferentially treated. It can, therefore, be said that the government's measure

is a reward to South Korea for its support for Japan's campaign. The South Korean government has reportedly accepted the offer.

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Cadarache in the southern part of France has been selected as a site for the construction of the ITER. Japan, the EU, South Korea, the US, Russia, China and India will take part in the project. The construction costs are expected to total approximately 570 billion yen. The EU, which has succeeded in hosting the project, will shoulder 45% of the total construction costs. The remaining six countries will shoulder approximately 9% respectively.

In return for giving up on its desire to host the ITER project, Japan last June obtained the right to preferential treatments, including that the EU procures 20% of the construction expenses it shoulders from Japanese domestic companies; related facilities should be built in Japan and the framework for Japanese personnel should be increased.

South Korea had supported Japan's efforts to invite the project. According to an informed source, there was a secret deal between the two countries that if Japan succeeds in hosting the project, Japan will increase procurement from South Korea.

South Korea had complained of the decision that Japan alone is to be awarded with preferential treatments in return for its giving up its bid to host the project, saying, "South Korea and Japan are in the same situation in the sense they are not the host country for ITER." Tokyo and Seoul have repeatedly held talks to settle this issue.

As a result, the two countries agreed that the Japanese government places orders with South Korea for projects worth about 11 billion yen out of 9% or approximately 52 billion yen of the ITER construction costs, on which Japan has the right to place orders.

The construction of ITER itself is expected to start next year or later.

17) Inclusion of backbones: US inspector says, "I did not receive training on export requirements"; Not aware of conditions for Japan-bound exports

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
Evening, February 25, 2006

In connection with the inclusion of backbones, a risk material that should have been as part of measures to prevent BSE infection, it has been learned that two USDA inspectors who authorized exports of products in question to Japan never received training on meat exports and did not know export conditions at all. The two testified in response to a hearing of circumstances conducted by the USDA.

It has become clear that a sloppy checking system in the US has given rise to the inclusion of backbones in the Japan-bound shipment. The testimony will bring to light the faulty meat control administration in the US.

The USDA on Feb. 17 submitted a report on the circumstances that have led to the inclusion of spinal columns and a package of measures designed to prevent a recurrence. The statements were unveiled through the deposition taken from the inspectors, which the USDA released as an appendix to the report.

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According to the statements, Inspector Wai Or, who authorized the export of beef by Atlantic Veal & Lamb Inc. in New York was hired nine months ago. He did not receive any training or orientation on export procedures. He did not know export requirements for

Japan, either. He reportedly noted that he thought his USDA veterinarian supervisor was responsible for that.

SCHIEFFER